

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 278642

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EGEN, TS, US

SUBJECT: U.S.-TUNISIAN JOINT COMMISSION

REF: TUNIS 7074

1. INTERAGENCY STEERING GROUP OF NSC UNDER SECRETARIES COMMITTEE MET DECEMBER 13 UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL AND REACHED DECISION ON SCOPE AND TENTATIVE STRUCTURE WE WOULD PROPOSE FOR U.S.-TUNISIAN JOINT COMMISSION.

2. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE MAJOR AREA FOR PROMISING COOPERATION, WHICH WE WOULD WANT TO STRESS, IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES, PROMOTING TRADE AND ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES. TUNISIAN LEADERS HAVE SPOKEN OF THEIR DESIRE TO EVOLVE NEW MEANS FOR THE TRANSFER OF CAPITAL,
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TECHNOLOGY, AND MANAGERIAL EXPERTISE, AND THEY APPEAR

WILLING TO DEVOTE A MAJOR NEW EFFORT TO ATTRACT AMERICAN PRIVATE INVESTMENT TO TUNISIA. THE INVESTMENT CLIMATE IN TUNISIA IS FAVORABLE, AIDED NOT ONLY BY THE IMPROVED TRADE BALANCE BUT ALSO BY THE LIBERAL POLICY OF THE GOT AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL STABILITY. THE FORTH-

COMING VISIT TO THE U.S. OF THE TUNISIAN MINISTER OF PLAN AND THE ACTIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN OPIC AND ITS TUNISIAN COUNTERPART ARE ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS UPON WHICH WE CAN BUILD. THE PROSPECTS FOR GROWTH OF TUNISIA'S MODEST OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION SUGGEST A MUCH STRONGER ROLE FOR TRADE IN FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. WE WOULD BE PREPARED UNDER THE COMMISSION TO BROADEN AND INTENSIFY OUR COOPERATION IN THESE AREAS, WHILE ASSIGNING PRIORITY ATTENTION TO SUCH PROMISING AVENUES AS DEVELOP.

3. IN REACHING THIS CONCLUSION, THE STEERING GROUP TOOK INTO ACCOUNT CURRENT PRESSURES ON USG RESOURCES AND JUDGED THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO RAISE TUNISIAN EXPECTATIONS OF NEW USG COMMITMENTS IN AREAS WHERE WE COULD NOT BE FORTHCOMING. THE GROUP EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY CURRENT BILATERAL ACTIVITIES IN SUCH FIELDS AS ECONOMIC AID, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, MILITARY COOPERATION, AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION ARE BEING CONDUCTED.

4. UNDER THE CONCEPT PROPOSED BY THE STEERING GROUP, THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE COULD SERVE AS U.S. CO-CHAIRMAN, AND AN ANNUAL EXCHANGE OF VISITS WITH A GOT CABINET COUNTERPART WOULD APPEAR TO BE REASONABLE. ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION COULD BE DRAWN FROM TREASURY, OPIC, AND STATE. IT APPEARS DESIRABLE TO AVOID FORMATION OF SUB-GROUPS, AS EMBASSY SUGGESTED; MEETINGS ON SPECIAL ISSUES COULD, IF NECESSARY, BE CONVENED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE COMMISSION. THE EMBASSIES IN THE TWO CAPITALS WOULD PROVIDE LIAISON BETWEEN COMMISSION MEETINGS AT THE CABINET LEVEL. (EMBASSY TUNIS WOULD HAVE THE PROMINENT AND KEY ROLE HERE. WE ARE NOT SURE THAT THE TUNISIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAS ADEQUATE LEVEL OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL EXPERTISE AT THIS TIME.) WE WOULD RELY ON EMBASSY TUNIS TO FILL OUT AMERICAN SIDE OF JOINT COMMISSION WHEN ANNUAL MEETING TAKES PLACE IN TUNIS.

5. FYI: IT WAS PROPOSED AT STEERING GROUP THAT LIFETIME OF THIS COMMISSION COULD BE LIMITED AT OUTSET TO TWO YEARS, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH A RENEWAL OR CHANGE OF STRUCTURE

TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE END OF THAT PERIOD. END FYI.
BASICALLY, WE WANT A JOINT COMMISSION WHICH WILL AIM AT
REGISTERING CONCRETE AND VISIBLE PROGRESS IN CAREFULLY
FOCUSED AREAS, IN LIEU OF AN UMBRELLA ARRANGEMENT WHICH
WOULD INSTITUTIONALIZE PRESENT RELATIONSHIPS (AND MIGHT
APPEAR STATIC).

6. DEPARTMENT REQUESTS COMMENTS OF EMBASSY TUNIS ON
CONCEPT OF RAISING OUR SIGHTS IN THIS CRITICAL AREA
OF COOPERATION AND AUTHORIZES EMBASSY AT ITS DISCRETION
TO CONDUCT PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION WITH GOT ON SUBSTANCE
OF FOREGOING. KISSINGER

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